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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to identify workable strategies for use in helping students develop greater confidence in their ability to learn and achieve in school. A sample of 82 graduate school students (primarily school teachers and administrators) studying school leadership completed an opinionnaire. The opinionnaire was designed to measure the frequency of agreement and disagreement with statements in the areas of success, teaching, reward, and feedback/follow-up. Statements related to each of these areas confirmed the value of confidence-building strategies. Teachers and principals were encouraged to: maintain high expectations for all students; help students to develop an "I can do it" attitude by breaking learning down to the level where success can be achieved; recognize learners for their successes; use a variety of techniques to explain a lesson; show enthusiasm in teaching and love for the subject area; show compassion in daily interactions with students; help students visualize rewards to be received by setting and achieving long-range goals; individualize awards to students for worthy achievements; use extrinsic rewards to get the immediate interest of students and gradually remove to allow intrinsic rewards to motivate the learner; set performance contracts with students; have conferences with students periodically; and demand that students do homework, grade it, and assign a value to it. (JDD)

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CORRECTING IMPAIRED STUDENT SELF-CONCEPTS: AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGY FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

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Correcting Impaired Student Self-Concepts:

An Instructional Leadership Strategy

for Teachers and Principals

Numerous studies have documented a link between student self-concept and its impact on student learning and achievement. Arthur W. Combs (1965), classic writing in the area of perceptual psychology, and Hass and Parkay (1993), reported that self-concept is what a person perceives himself/herself to be, it is what the person believes about oneself. Combs, also said reality for each individual lies, not in the outside world, but in the person's own perceptions.

If the reality for each student in a teacher's class lies in the perception that the student holds of oneself, the teacher must make a concerted effort to develop in each student the "I can do it attitude". But the "I can do it attitude" implies drive, persistence, determination, and confidence.

Confidence, which means self-assurance, appears to be at the core of self-concepts. Abi-Nader (1990), in a paper dealing with strategies the teacher uses to help the students imagine success and have the confidence to pursue it, reported the teacher helps the students with their self-image as learners and as communicators in the following ways: (1) by raising expectations and standards for academic and social performance, (2) by using positive language in classroom interaction both to praise students for their successes as well as to correct mistakes, and (3) by giving them the opportunity to "try on" new images through role-playing.

Although Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines self-esteem as a confidence and satisfaction in oneself, some studies seem to use self-concept and self-esteem interchangeable. Burkholder (1992) evaluated the effects of a self-esteem program for second graders by using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. She found that participants in the self-esteem program had higher adjusted post mean scores for Intellectual and School Status and Anxiety than nonparticipants. Uroff and Greene (1991) reported that individuals with high self-esteem see themselves as being capable, worthwhile, and valued. They also said, if students are to build their self-esteem they must experience the four A's -- attention, acceptance, appreciation, and affection.

PURPOSE

It appears that whether one speaks of self-concepts or self-esteem, when the focus is on how an individual feels about self and self-assurance, confidence in one's self is a key factor in the effort necessary for successful learning experiences. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to identify workable strategies that teachers and principals can use to help students develop greater confidence in their ability to learn and achieve in school.

METHOD

A sample of 82 graduate school students studying school leadership, which consisted primarily of school teachers and administrators, were used to collect the data. Each graduate student participating in the study completed a twenty item opinionnaire.

The opinionnaire was designed to measure the frequency of responses in four areas. These areas were as follows: (1) success, (2) teaching, (3) reward, and (4) feedback/follow up. Five statements relating to each area affecting student learning were developed in the opinionnaire.

SPSS frequencies were used to analyze opinionnaire returns and to get a good impression of the data. From this impression, frequency tables with percents were created to display the results and to formulate conclusions.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the professional positions of participants in the study. Of the total sample of 82 graduate students, there were 65 teachers (80%), 8 principals (10%), 6 superintendents (7%), and 2 others (3%). Teachers were the most dominant professionals in the group.

Table 2 reports the sex of participants in the sample. There were 55 females (69%) and 25 males (31%) in the sample. Females represented more than twice the number of male participants in the sample.

TABLE 1

PROFESSIONAL POSITION

	FREQUENCY	VALID %
TEACHERS	65	80.2
PRINCIPALS	8	9.9
SUPERINTENDENTS	6	7.4
OTHERS	2	2.5
	1	Missing
TOTAL	82	100.0

TABLE 2

SEX OF SAMPLE

	FREQUENCY	VALID %
MALES	25	31.3
FEMALES	55	68.8
	2	Missing
TOTAL	82	100.0

Table 3 shows the school organization of participants in the study. Of the total sample of 82, there were twenty-four K-6 schools (31%), thirteen 7-9 schools (17%), eleven 7-12 schools (14%), nine K-3 schools (12%), eight 10-12 schools (10%), seven 4-6 schools (9%), and six 6-8 schools (8%). K-6 schools represented the largest number of school organizations in the group. The second largest number was 7-9 school organizations and the third was 7-12 schools.

Table 4 displays the school enrollment range of participants in the study. In rank order, the school enrollment range was as follows: 301-600 range 27 (35%), 601-900 range 19 (24%), 901-1200 range 6 (8%), 1501-1800 range 4 (5%), and 1801-2100 range 2 (3%). Thus the 301-600 school enrollment range represented the size of most frequent occurrence in the sample. The second largest school enrollment size was 601-900 range and third was 901-1200 size range.

TABLE 3

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

	FREQUENCY	VALID %
K-3	9	11.5
4-6	7	9.0
K-6	24	30.8
6-8	6	7.7
7-9	13	16.7
10-12	8	10.3
7-12	11	14.1
	4	Missing
TOTAL	82	100.0

TABLE 4

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RANGE

	FREQUENCY	VALID %
0-300	9	11.5
301-600	27	34.6
601-900	19	24.4
901-1200	11	14.1
1201-1500	6	7.7
1501-1800	4	5.1
1801-2100	2	2.6
	4	Missing
TOTAL	82	100.0

Table 5 shows the results of the five (5) statements on success. The results for the success statements were as follows: (1) administrators must see to it that teachers are presenting classroom instructions at the learning level of the student, 42 agree (52%), 33 strongly agree (41%), 4 disagree (5%), and 2 strongly disagree (3%); (2) administrators see that they recognize learners for their success though they may be small, 39 agree (48%), 35 strongly agree (43%), 3 disagree (4%), and 4 strongly agree (5%); (3) administrators must help teachers to develop "I can do it" attitude in learners, 33 agree (41%), 45 strongly agree (56%), 1 disagree (1%), 2 strongly disagree (3%); and (4) teachers must maintain high expectations for student achievement and help them to set higher goals, 35 agree (43%), 45 strongly agree (56%), 1 disagree (1%), and 0 disagree (0%); and (5) the first 3 to 6 weeks of grading student's work give all students A's, tell them that they can keep the A's the next grading period but they must work harder, 6 agree (7%), 7 strongly agree (9%), 35 disagree (43%), and 33 strongly disagree (41%).

When categories of agree and disagree are combined, four of the success statements pertaining to developing a student's confidence in learning recorded high percentages for agreement. In rank order, for instance, the success statements with combined high percentages of agreement were as follows: (1) teachers maintaining high expectations for student achievement and help students to set higher goals, 8 agree (99%) and 1 disagree (1%); (2) administrators must help teachers to develop an "I can do it" attitude in learners, 78 agree (96%), and 3 disagree (4%); (3) administrators must see that teachers are presenting classroom instruction at the learning level of the student, 75 agree (93%), and 6 disagree (7%); and (4) administrators should see that teachers recognize learners for their success though they may be small, 74 agree (91%), and 7 disagree (9%).

TABLE 5

SUCCESS

VALID PERCENTS

STATEMENTS	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Strongly Agree	Freq.	Disagree	Freq.	Strongly Disagree
1. For the first 3 to 6 weeks of grading student's work give all students "A", tell them they can keep the "A" the next grading period but they must work harder.	6	7.4	7	8.6	35	43.2	33	40.7
2. Administrators must see that teachers are presenting classroom instructions at the learning level of the student to increase confidence.	42	51.9	33	40.7	4	4.9	2	2.5
3. Administrators should see that teachers recognize learners for their successes though they may be small to increase confidence in learning.	39	48.1	35	43.2	3	3.7	4	4.9
4. Administrators must help teachers to develop an "I can do it" attitude in learners to increase confidence in learning.	33	40.7	45	55.6	1	1.2	2	2.5
5. Teachers who maintain high expectations for student achievement, help students to set higher goals, thus, increasing student confidence in learning.	35	43.2	45	55.6	1	1.2	0	0

Table 6 shows the results of the teaching statements relating to student's confidence in learning. The results of the 5 teaching statements were as follows: (1) technology (computers, VCR, etc.) is a useful tool for motivation, stimulation, and participation, 31 agree (38%), 48 strong agree (59%), 2 disagree (3%), and 0 strongly disagree (0%); (2) teachers who smile, show enthusiasm in teaching, loves subject area, communicates excitement to students, 20 agree (25%), 59 strongly agree (73%), 1 disagree (1%), and 1 strongly disagree (1%); (3) a variety of activities that allow for different ways to learn, 26 agree (32%), 54 strongly agree (67%), 1 disagree (1%), and 0 strongly disagree (0%); (4) teacher should give students a second chance if needed on all exams by developing more than one form of the test, 26 agree (32%), 26 strongly agree (32%), 25 disagree (31%), and 4 strongly disagree (5%); and (5) teacher and administrators must show compassion in teaching and interacting with students on a daily basis, 31 agree (38%), 48 strongly agree (59%), 2 disagree (3%), and 0 strongly disagree (0%).

The results in Table 6 presented by combining both forms of agree and disagree in rank order show 4 very highly significant teaching statements. These ranked teaching statement results are: (1) a variety of activities that allow for different ways to learn, 8 agree (99%), and 1 disagree (1%); (2) technology (computers, VCR's, etc.) is a useful tool for motivation, stimulation, and participation, 79 agree (98%), and 2 disagree (2%); (2) teachers who smile, show enthusiasm in teaching, loves subject area, and communicates excitement to students, 79 agree (98%) and 2 disagree (2%); and (3) teachers should give students a second chance if needed on all exams by developing more than one form of test to let students retake, 52 agree (64%), and 29 disagree (35%).

TABLE 6

TEACHING

VALID PERCENTS

STATEMENTS	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Strongly Agree	Freq.	Disagree	Freq.	Strongly Disagree
1. Technology (computers, VCR's, etc.) is a useful tool for motivation, stimulation... in learning activities to increase a student's confidence in learning.	31	38.4	48	59.3	2	2.5	0	0
2. Teachers who smile, show enthusiasm in teaching, loves subject area and communicates excitement to students increase their confidence, interest and desire to learn.	20	24.7	59	72.8	1	1.2	1	1.2
3. A variety of activities that allow for different ways to learn develops confidence in a student's interest in learning.	26	32.1	54	66.7	1	1.2	0	0
4. Teachers should give students a second chance if needed on all exams by developing more than one form of the test to let students retake to build a student's confidence in learning.	26	32.1	26	32.1	25	30.9	4	4.9
5. Teachers and administrators must show compassion in teaching and interacting with students on a daily basis to promote confidence in learning.	31	38.3	48	59.3	2	2.5	0	0

Table 7 displays the results of the rewards statements to develop student confidence in learning. The reward statements revealed the following results: (1) administrators should see to it that all learners are given a tangible reward for individual initiative, 28 agree (35%), 17 strongly agree (21%), 31 disagree (38%), and 5 strongly disagree (6%); (2) administrators and teachers must help learners to visualize the reward to be received by setting and achieving meaningful long range goals, 48 agree (59%), 26 strongly agree (32%), 7 disagree (9%), and 0 strongly disagree (0%); (3) teachers should use extrinsic rewards to get the immediate interest of learners and gradually remove to allow intrinsic rewards to motivate the learner to continuous achievement, 47 agree (58%), 17 strongly agree (21%), 16 disagree (20%), and 1 strongly disagree (1%); (4) teachers need to individualize awards to students in order to increase confidence, 49 agree (61%), 22 strongly agree (28%), 6 disagree (8%), and 3 strongly disagree (4%); and (5) words of praise can be just as effective as extrinsic awards in promoting student confidence, 34 agree (43%), 42 strongly agree (53%), 3 disagree (4%), and 1 strongly disagree (1%).

The results of reward statements in Table 7 can be combined and arranged in rank order. This combined ranking of reward statements for the categories of agree and disagree reveals results as follows: (1) word of praise can be just as effective as extrinsic awards in promoting student confidence, 76 agree (95%), and 4 disagree (5%); (2) administrators and teachers must help learners to visualize the reward to be received by setting and achieving meaningful long range goals, 74 agree (91%) and 7 disagree (9%); (3) teachers need to individualize awards to students in order to increase student confidence, 71 agree (89%), and 9 disagree (11%); (4) teachers should use extrinsic rewards to get the immediate interest of learners and gradually remove to allow intrinsic rewards, 64 agree (79%) and 17 disagree (21%); and (5) administrators should see to it that all learners are given a tangible reward

for individual initiative to promote confidence in learning, 45 agree (55%) and 36 disagree (45%).

Five follow-up or feedback statements were written to determine impact on student confidence and desire to learn. Table 8 shows the results of the follow-up/feedback statements. These results are as follows: (1) periodically, conference with students and provide them with statements concerning their assets and areas needing improvement, 44 agree (55%), 33 strongly agree (41%), 2 disagree (3%), and 1 strongly disagree (1%); (2) a performance contract which specifies what the teacher wants from the student, what the student wants to learn for himself and how the final evaluation will be determined, 55 agree (66%), 17 strongly agree (21%), 9 disagree (11%), and 1 strongly disagree (1%); (3) since students learn to value what is graded, administrators must require teachers to assign and grade homework, 37 agree (46%), 18 strongly agree (23%), 18 disagree (23%), and 7 strongly disagree (9%); (4) if students are not doing their homework they should be given an appropriate consequence, 38 agree (48%), 31 strongly agree (39%), 5 disagree (6%), and 6 strongly disagree (8%); and (5) the school administrator should talk with at least two student learners per academic area or grade level per week to determine their concerns, 38 agree (48%), 15 strongly agree (19%), 21 disagree (26%), and 6 strongly disagree (8%).

TABLE 7

REWARD

VALID PERCENTS

STATEMENTS	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Strongly Agree	Freq.	Disagree	Freq.	Strongly Disagree
1. Administrators should see to it that all learners are given a tangible reward for individual initiative to promote confidence in learning.	28	34.6	17	21.0	31	38.3	5	6.2
2. Administrators and teachers must help learners to visualize the reward to be received by setting and achieving meaningful long range goals.	48	59.3	26	32.1	7	8.6	0	0
3. Teachers should use extrinsic rewards to get the immediate interest of learners and gradually remove t oallow intrinsic rewards to motivate the learner to continuous achievement.	47	58.0	17	21.0	16	19.8	1	1.2
4. Teachers need to individualilze awards to students in order to increase students confidence. What may be motivating to one student may not necessarily be to others.	49	61.3	22	27.5	6	7.5	3	3.8
5. Words of praise can be just as effective as extrinsic awards in promoting students to learn and build confidence.	34	42.5	42	52.5	3	3.8	1	1.3

Table 8 results on follow-up/feedback statements can be presented by combining categories of agree and disagree. The combined ranked results for the follow-up/feedback statements were as follows: (1) periodically, conference with students and provide them with statements concerning their assets and areas needing improvement, 77 agree (96%) and 3 disagree (4%); (2) a performance contract which specifies what the teacher wants from the student, what the student wants to learn for himself and how the final evaluation will be determined, 70 agree (87%) and 10 disagree (13%); (3) if students are not doing their homework they should be given an appropriate consequence, 69 agree (86%) and 25 disagree (31%); and (5) the school administrator should talk with at least 2 student learners per academic area or grade level per week to determine their concerns, 53 agree (66%) and 27 disagree (34%).

TABLE 8

FOLLOW-UP/FEEDBACK

VALID PERCENTS

STATEMENTS	Freq.	Agree	Freq.	Strongly Agree	Freq.	Disagree	Freq.	Strongly Disagree
1. Periodically, conference with students and provide them with statements concerning their assets and areas needing improvement will increase their confidence and desire to learn.	44	55.0	33	41.3	2	2.5	1	1.3
2. A performance contract which specify what the teacher wants from the student, what the student wants to learn for oneself, and how the final evaluation will be determined is a useful tool to increase student learning and confidence.	53	66.3	17	21.3	9	11.3	1	1.3
3. Since students learn to value what is graded, administrators must require teachers to assign and grade homework to increase student confidence and desire to learn.	37	46.3	18	22.5	18	22.5	7	8.8
4. Students who are not doing their homework they should be given an appropriate consequence.	38	47.5	31	38.8	5	6.3	6	7.5
5. The school administrator should talk with at least 2 student learners per academic area or grade level per week to determine their concerns to increase confidence in learning.	38	47.5	15	18.8	21	26.3	6	7.5

CONCLUSIONS

As stated previously, when categories of agree and disagree in Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 for each statement used to identify success, teaching, reward, and follow-up/feedback, the participants in the study confirmed the value of the strategy with very high percentages. Strategies in rank order concluded, according to each corresponding area to increase student confidence in learning were as follows:

SUCCESS

- Teachers who maintain high expectations for student achievement, help students to set higher goals, increase student learning (99%).
- Administrators must help teachers develop an "I can do it" attitude in learners (97%).
- Administrators must see that teachers are presenting classroom instructions at the learning level of the student (93%).
- Administrators should see that teachers recognize learners for their successes though they may be small (91%).

TEACHING

- A variety of activities that allow for different ways to learn develops interest in learnings (99%).
- Teachers who smile, show enthusiasm in teaching, loves subject area and communicates excitement to students, increase their interest and desire to learn (98%).

- Technology (computers, VCR's etc.) is a useful tool for motivation, stimulation, and participation in learning activities (98%).

REWARD

- Words of praise can be just as effective as extrinsic awards in promoting students to learn (95%).
- Administrators and teachers must help learners to visualize the reward to be received by setting and achieving meaningful long range goals (91%).
- Teachers need to individualize awards to students in order to increase student learning (89%).
- Teachers should use extrinsic rewards to get the immediate interest of learners and gradually remove to allow intrinsic reward to motivate the learner to continuous achievement (89%).

FOLLOW-UP/FEEDBACK

- Periodically, conference with students and provide them with statements concerning their assets and areas needing improvement (96%).
- A performance contract which specify what the teacher wants from the student, what the student wants to learn for one's self, and how the final evaluation will be determined is a useful tool to increase student learning (87%).
- Students who are not doing their homework should be given an appropriate consequence (86%).
- Since students learn to value what is graded, administrators must require teachers to assign and grade homework to increase students desire to learn (69%).

SUMMARY

Reviewing the conclusions from this study, it was evident that the participants in the sample basically agreed with the statements used to emphasize success, teaching, reward, and follow-up/feedback. Each statement in the conclusion list was supported by a high percentage for agreement. Therefore, it would be wise for teachers and principals to study and design ways to incorporate these conclusions (strategies) into classroom and school leadership practices to increase students confidence in learning which will in time correct a student's impaired self-concepts.

More specifically, to correct students impaired self-concepts teachers and principals must implement classroom and school wide activities to help students develop more confidence in their ability to learn. This can be done by: (1) maintaining high expectation for all students; (2) helping students to develop an "I can do it" attitude by breaking the learning down to the level where success can be achieved; (3) recognize learners for their successes though they are small; (4) use a variety of activities (techniques) to explain a lesson; (5) smile, show enthusiasm in teaching and love for subject area; (6) show compassion in teaching when you interact with students daily; (7) use words of praise for a student's worthy accomplishment; (8) help students to visualize the reward to be received by setting and achieving long-range goals; (9) individualize awards to students for worthy achievements; (10) use extrinsic rewards to get the immediate interest of students and gradually remove; (11) conference with students, periodically, and provide them with statements concerning their assets and areas needing improvement; (12) set performance contracts with students to specify what the teacher wants from the student and what the student wants to learn for one's self; and (13) demand that students do homework, grade it and assign a value to it.

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